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**Item 8-C. Process to Fill Vacant Council Seat**

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From Susan Westman <susan@bestwestman.com>

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To City Council <citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us>

January 7, 2025

Dear City Council Members,

On your agenda for January 9, 2025 is item 8-C "Process to fill vacant Council seat". I am hopeful that when the Council discusses this item that you will be mindful of the need to have some community input as part of the section process. Normally having an election to fill this position would provide for the most direct input from the community but a special election of that type will have a cost and time delay. As it is important to have a full 5-member Council I would offer the following suggestions to include in a selection process.

The Council should have a process that allows for applications to be accepted for this 2-year term. The applicants for this appointment should be committed to serving out the remainder of Mayor Brooks term and not be a candidate in the next election in 2026.

Not having the applicants be candidates in the 2026 election leaves that 2026 election process untainted. This is similar to the approach used by Governor Newsom in filling the 2-year Senate vacancy created by the death of Diane Feinstein.

There are numerous ways the Council can screen the applications but some community members should be involved in the screening process and having the process open to the public is critical.

Whatever committee is set up to evaluate the applications should use a consistent evaluation method for all applicants and have a rank scoring system. This is the only method that will allow for transparency in the ranking process.

Having this type of open process is important to assure the community that the Council has selected the best person to fill this 2-year term. It assures the public that this was not simply a politically motivated choice but shows the Council is choosing the best applicant to help Capitola move forward during the next 2 years. There are many important items which Capitola faces at this time. The mall project and City revenues are a top priority. Decisions on implementing the City's new adopted Housing Element are critical. Helping the City's businesses move through challenging times for retail in the Village and on 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue need to be addressed are a few examples.

Understandably this is a unique time for Capitola but it will be important for the Council to:

1. Involve the community in this selection process.
2. Select someone who is going to fill this position for 2 years but will not be a candidate in 2026.

3. Make certain there is a transparent ranking system of the applicants.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these issues.

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